

Making a List and Checking it Twice

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The standard advice for remembering all that we want to ask or tell the doctor is for us to make a list and bring it with us. But this does not always work well -- sometimes doctors are not receptive to lists. Why? Dr. Frederic Platt, a physician in Colorado, says that the lists are often: *too long* (with more problems than can be addressed in one visit); *unorganized* (with related topics scattered throughout the list); and there is often *only one copy* (usually held by the patient, leaving doctors feeling out of control).¹

But making lists is a good idea. So if you want your doctors to be more accepting of it, you might ask them how they'd like you to go about it. You could also try the following suggestions, offered by Dr. Platt.²

1. Make the list as long and complete as you can;
2. Take a break, return & review for completeness;
3. When finally complete, reread, take another break, come back and organize it by:
 - a. Grouping related items, and
 - b. Rewriting the list with the problem-clusters, ranked in order of importance -- understanding that there may be only enough time to address one or two of them; and
4. Bring two copies of the list.

If you don't get around to making a list before your visit, you might think of writing one while you wait in the doctor's office. If you want to hold onto yours, you can ask the receptionist to make a second copy.

¹ F.W. Platt, "The Dreaded list," *Patient Care* 31(4):122, (Feb 28, 1997).

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